UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/2078
9 February 1996

FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* Secretary-General sends Special Envoy to Sudan for discussions on combatting terrorism.

* Conference on Disarmament told linking nuclear weapons elimination to comprehensive test-ban treaty threatens both goals.

* International Police Task Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina expects to be fully operational by end of May.

* UNDP calls for action to combat global threat of desertication.

* Signs of economic recovery in countries in transition, according to new UN study.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Chali will send Under-Secretary-General Chinmaya Gharekhan, as his Special Envoy to Sudan to discuss with the Government efforts to combat terrorism in the region, as well as the recently adopted Security Council resolution 1044 (1996), a United Nations spokesman said today. The resolution calls for Sudan to cooperate in extraditing to Ethiopia, suspects in the June 1995 assassination attempt on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa. The Council asked the Secretary-General to report on the resolution's implementation within 60 days.

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The International Police Task Force (IPTF) for Bosnia and Herzegovina is expected to be fully operational by the end of May, a United Nations spokesman said today. Already, 2,100 police monitors have been pledged for the Force, which has an authorized strength of 1,721. Civilian police will also serve with the United Nations Transitional Authority for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES), which has been promised 160 out of the 600 officers needed.

At a meeting yesterday, the United Nations urged civilian police contributors to expedite the sending of police officers. Contributors said they would try to send only well-qualified officers, as there have been problems with

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some unskilled police recruits, the spokesman said. The police receive a one-week training programme in Zagreb.

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Linking a comprehensive test-ban treaty (CTBT) to a time-bound framework for the elimination of nuclear weapons would threaten both goals, the United States representative, Stephen J. Ledogar told the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, yesterday. His Government and many others were dismayed by the call by the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Cartagena, Colombia, last October, to link the two issues. What did "time-bound framework" mean, he asked, and how would it affect nuclear capable or "threshold" States, which unlike NPT States, had no treaty commitments?

Mr. Ledogar said the five declared nuclear weapon States were not all ready to respond to the challenge of multilateral negotiations. The United States and the Russian Federation had conducted successful bilateral efforts to reduce their nuclear arsenals, and France and the United Kingdom had taken unilateral disarmament steps. China, however, continued nuclear testing and the build-up in its nuclear arsenal. The representative of China, Sha Zukang, said it was understandable if non-nuclear-weapons-States expressed concern over Chinese testing. But the United States was not qualified to lecture China on the very limited amount of nuclear weapons it possessed for self-defence. China's tests were extremely limited and would cease the moment the CTBT came into effect.

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The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator James Gustave Speth has called for urgent action to fight the global threat to desertification and drought. He was addressing the eighth session, in Geneva, this week, of the negotiating committee for the Convention to Combat Desertification. Mr. Speth underscored the fact that dryland issues figure prominently in UNDP's normal work, which, he said, placed a strategic priority on poverty elimination and environmental regeneration. He proposed that UNDP could co-host the funding mechanism with IFAD and undertake pilot actions to combat desertification to avoid delays in implementing the Convention.

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Despite the first signs of economic recovery, it would be the end of the century before countries in transition, from centrally planned to market economies, regained 1989 output levels, according to a recent study by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE). The study provides an analysis of industrial restructuring in countries in transition, as well as the situation in three Baltic States and eight members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

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The economic slump, which followed radical political changes in 1989, had been deeper than expected, however, factors other than the transition process probably played a part, the study says. It cites the collapse of the market within the Soviet trading bloc and imbalances, particularly between industrial production and consumption. Despite the disintegration of old economic systems and traditional trade links, industry in most of the countries still relied heavily on markets in other transition economies and the newly independent States.

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